DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 369 020 CG 025 368

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TITLE A Study of Some Psychological Correlates of HIV Positive Veterans.
PUB DATE 22 Aug 93
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention at the American Psychological Association (101st, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, August 20-24, 1993).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome; *Homeless People; Social Influences; *Veterans
IDENTIFIERS Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory; Texas (Houston)

ABSTRACT

In an effort to compare the psychological characteristics of HIV positive veterans who are homeless with those who are not homeless, the psychological test performances of patients referred to the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Houston, Texas were examined. Investigators analyzed the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) average scale scores for 20 patients. Statistical comparison of the 9 homeless HIV positive veterans versus the 11 non-homeless HIV positive veterans revealed no significant differences between the two groups, paralleling previous research. Therefore, since this study suggests that the main difference between the non-homeless and the homeless is that the latter have no place to live, professionals and the community need to provide the homeless HIV positive patient with the tools necessary to prevent future episodes of homelessness through assistance in obtaining disability income, substance abuse treatment and aftercare (if applicable), and vocational assistance. (RJM)

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A Study of Some Psychological Correlates of HIV Positive Veterans

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Presented to:

The American Psychological Association Convention
Division 18: Psychologists in Public Service
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

August 22, 1993

CG025368

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Abstract

This study examined psychological test performances of patients referred for psychological services in an effort to compare psychological characteristics of HIV positive veterans who are homeless and not homeless. The MMPI was administered to these patients. Statistical comparisons of homeless HIV positve veterans versus non-homeless HIV positive veterans were made utilizing average scale scores on the MMPI. The two groups were remarkably similar in their performance on this instrument. Results obtained support the null hypothesis with this subset of HIV positive veterans and indicate a marked homogeneity of compared groups with respect to scores on a commonly utilized test of personality and psychopathology.

A Study of Some Psychological Correlates of HIV Positive Veterans

Homelessness and the incidence of HIV infection represents a serious societal problem and this population has received a great deal of attention recently. Research has been conducted typically utilizing background information, interview data and demographics in an effort to describe characteristics of this population. Clinical studies of the homeless HIV positive population are needed which will help clarify characteristics of this population so that treatment programs can be designed and implemented which take into account any important unique psychological attributes of this group of clients versus others. Previous research (Thompson & Anderson, 1991) examined psychological test variables of homeless veterans and this study is an expansion to include the HIV positive veteran population.

Method

Subjects

Subjects were selected from veteran patients with a diagnosis of HIV+ who had computerized psychological test data on record at the Houston VAMC. Subjects were classified as homeless or non-homeless according to their medical record. Eleven subjects were classified as having a home and nine subjects were classified as homeless. All subjects had at least an MMPI on computer record at the Houston VAMC.

Statistics

Means and standard deviations were completed for mean T scores for the MMPI. Means for homeless and non-homeless HIV+ subjects were compared by computing t tests for groups with unequal standard deviations.

Results

MMPI

Means and standard deviations for subscale T scores were computed and are presented in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Means are also presented in graphic form in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

T scores for homeless and non-homeless subjects were compared by computing t tests for groups with unequal standard deviations. All mean T scores were quite similar for homeless and non-homeless groups. Standard deviations are also similar for both groups and reflect a wide variability in psychopathology among both homeless and non-homeless HIV+ subjects who had been referred for mental health services.

Discussion

An objective psychological test (MMPI) was administered and indices of psychological and psychopathological characteristics were analyzed comparing a group of homeless HIV+ patients referred for mental health treatment at the Houston VAMC with a similar non-homeless group. Overall, no significant differences were found.

This finding parallels the finding of the previous research (Thompson & Anderson, 1991) cited above. This study is limited by the small sample size and further research would be interesting incorporating a larger sample. Results of this study may suggest the main difference between homeless and non-homeless HIV+ veterans referred for mental health services is that the homeless have no place to live. This spells out the importance of assisting the homeless HIV+ veteran with accessing community resources as part of their mental health treatment. Homeless HIV+ veterans require not only psychotherapy, but also counseling regarding job placement,

housing, benefits, according to their individual needs and capabilities. This research suggests this population is diverse and treatment planning should be made on an individual basis taking into consideration individual needs, strengths, weaknesses and personal goals. Referrals for community resources should be made with special care to match the individual patient with appropriate resources. This requires the referring professional be knowledgeable of the community resources (or to consult with a professional who has this expertise) as well as the patient. It is equally important to provide the homeless HIV+ patient with the tools necessary to prevent future episodes of homelessness through assistance in obtaining disability income, substance abuse treatment and aftercare (if applicable) and vocational assistance. Clearly, the homeless HIV+ mentally ill veteran requires comprehensive treatment and aftercare planning.

References

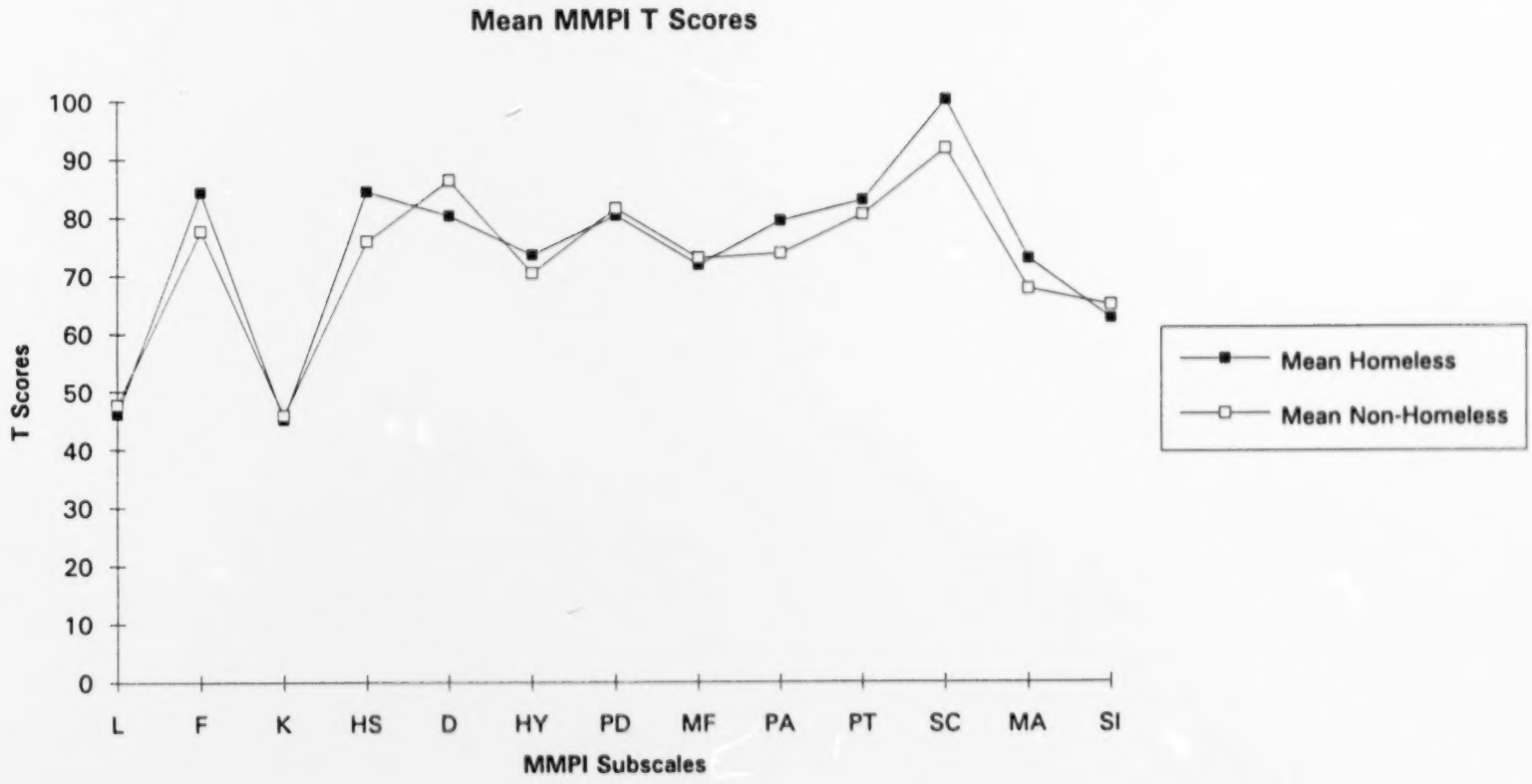
Thompson, J. P. & Anderson, T. R. (1991, August). A study of some psychological characteristics of homeless veterans. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Psychological Association Convention, San Francisco, CA.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for MMPI Subscale T Scores

Subscale	Mean Homeless	s Homeless	Mean Non-homeless	s Non-homeless
L	46.1	4.7	47.7	5.9
F	84.3	17.3	77.6	16.6
K	45.1	7.6	45.8	6.6
HS	84.4	15.4	75.9	13.7
D	80.3	13.6	86.4	20.0
HY	73.5	11.4	70.4	8.6
PD	80.3	11.5	81.5	15.2
MF	71.8	5.3	72.9	12.1
PA	79.3	14.2	73.7	16.1
PT	82.8	13.6	80.4	17.9
SC	100	23.5	91.7	25.4
MA	72.7	19.0	67.5	7.6
SI	62.4	11.9	64.7	12.7

Table 2


Mean MMPI T Scores
T Scores
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
L
F
K
HS
D
HY
PD
MF
PA
PT
SC
MA
SI
MMPI Subscales
Mean Homeless
Mean Non-Homeless